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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE TEST OF LOVE.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."—MATT. vii. 21.

There can be no doubt to those who have followed the line of controversy which ran through the whole of Christ's life—his controversy with the leading religious teachers of his time—that he here throws into contrast the spirit of ethical living and the spirit of emotional living. He is endeavoring to show, in these words, the necessity of character, conduct and life, as a true foundation on which to stand and hope, as distinct from religiousness, whether ceremonial or emotive. All the way through the teaching of the Saviour, this same contrast was eminent; and the apostles had occasion, time and again, to pursue the same line of discrimination, and rebuke men for having neither godliness in life, nor religiousness in feeling, and for so far being totally destitute and deficient. Sometimes—not unfrequently—men were rebuked for being religious in feeling, but not godly in life.

We find the Apostle John, especially in the chapter which we read in the opening service, making the same distinction. He taught that to keep Christ's commandments was the test of being Christ's disciple. The duty of keeping the law of God, action, ethical living, was insisted upon by him.

Among the Jews, scrupulosity in the maintenance of their ritual law was the secret of their church life. They were blinded. When they had been carried away captive, and beaten as with a flail, the more earnest among them endeavored to hold the people together. And in reading the old Scriptures, they interpreted them to say that if the law were kept with absolute perfectness, God would both save them from their enemies, and exalt them to unknown heights of glory. They set about doing it. They undertook to keep the law, understanding by *the law*, the ritual law—the letter of the law. This they kept with extreme scrupulousness,

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not only to the very letter, but a little way beyond, in order to allow for shrinkage, or mistake. And it was in this extreme scrupulosity that they placed their hope.

We find all through the teachings of Christ the recognition of this, and his criticism or judgment upon it.

At a later period there grew up many religious people in the midst of the Christian Church who relaxed somewhat their tenacious hold upon external things. There grew up a morbid and artificial spirit of self-sacrifice. And men in some degree thought themselves to be Christians in the proportion in which they vio lated the natural appetites and the natural affections. Giving a literal rendering to the words of the Master, they did attempt to crucify their minds and their affections. Love itself was put into prison and into disgrace, and men thought they were saints in proportion as they sacrificed the most innocent of affections and rela tions. They thought they became pure and high in the sight of God in the proportion in which they practised self-repression.

Then sprang up, as a rebound from this, in natures that could not follow it, an intensely practical life; and works and deeds of compassion, without special regard to the nature of the inward states, became signs of safety, and tests of salvableness. Works of righteousness, in one way and another, came to be the grounds and foundations of men's hopes.

Now, all these grounds are partial. The ground of hope consists neither in practical life, nor in an emotive life, nor in the rigor with which one denies himself, nor in the scrupulosity with which one observes known or recognized standards of duty. It consists in the totality which is made up of all these; and we are in a condition of grace or in a condition of safety, not in the proportion in which we have feeling alone; nor in the proportion in which we have practice alone; nor in the proportion in which we perform works of charity alone; but in the proportion in which we combine all the elements of our nature until we have become perfect men in Christ Jesus, so that all emotive experiences, and all determinations, and all intellectual cognitions, and all experiences of joy, are embraced in our Christian experience. Wherever a person takes any one of these elements alone, and carries it to excess, it tends to rebound, by-and-by, to the opposite extreme. And so, in different periods, the Church has been moving from one side to another under the principle of reaction.

There are multitudes in our times who regard the evidences of piety as lying very largely in the nature and strength of their Christian emotions; and there is an equal number, probably, who

mourn because they have no such emotions, because they have no comfortable evidence of their acceptance with God through Jesus Christ. Far be it from me to say that this is not a thing to be desired and sought. Where it is normal, where it is the fruit of the soul brought to a full ethical life, it is both beautiful and desirable. Where it is wholesome and natural, it tends to produce Christian practice, and to make it easier to lead men along the line of practical endeavor.

But, on the other hand, where Christian emotion, or emotion excited under conditions which lead one to suppose it to be Christian emotion, exists alone, and separated from wholesome causations and connections, it tends to supplant right living, and to substitute a kind of intoxicating experience for a manly, practical, wholesome life.

Men seek, often, in revivals of religion, or what may be called *studies* for them, to carry up their feelings to great intensity. They seek faith, joy, rapture, ecstasy. They attempt to kindle in their minds an enthusiasm of moral feeling. They have an impression, when they have carried excitement in this direction to such a degree that it begins to be an intuition, that they are nearer to God; that they are in a more eminent state of piety; that they are in a condition of acceptance which transcends that in which they ordinarily live.

Now, I myself believe that the mind, carried up to its intuitional state, is exalted to a higher plane and is in a higher sphere; I believe that the best action of any faculty is that which is under very high excitement; but I do not think that living in a state of high moral enthusiasm—even that which is intuitional—is necessarily the type of the best piety, in which phrase I comprehend the whole man—body, soul and spirit. I do not regard those who are the most susceptible of these higher forms of feeling, or those who are the most filled with rejoicing, as the best Christians. They *may* be the best, but they are not necessarily so. For emotion, alone, even if it be *moral* emotion, is but a means to an end. At any rate, it is but one among many elements which go to constitute the true Christian life.

There are many reasons why men seek these high feelings. One seems to be this: that they differ from ordinary experiences—that they appear to be special divine evidences of acceptance with God. When men have been living in such a state that they have had no rare emotions; when they have been living so that there has been nothing stimulating nor exhilarating in their experience; and when, under the influence of social excitements,

of religious meetings, of any causes which wake their minds up to a very high state, they go into an experience of vivid, intense, and joyful moral feeling, then they seem to think that is a direct product of the influence of the Divine Spirit upon their souls. I am wont to think that all high feeling is a direct product of the influence of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul; but they think that it is special, personal, and in the nature of a Divine assurance. They think they are sons of God because they have such, to them, rare and strange emotions, and emotions that are so intense.

If a man dream that he lies with the ladder of Jacob before him, and that angels are going up and down; and if he wake in a state of rapture, or of serenity even, he fancies that he has been brought from sin to righteousness, and that there is in that circumstance, somewhere or somehow, evidence that he is a child of God.

These high-feelings appeal, indeed, to the most bewitching part of a man's nature—his imagination. There is no faculty, not excepting reason itself, that has so much to do with the production in us of tenacious impressions, as the imagination; and when reason acts through the affections and the imagination, it works far more powerfully and fruitfully than at any other time. All high feeling tends to mingle itself with the imagination; and a kind of fantasy is the result.

Then, over and above that, there is a love of excitement which is just as likely to prevail in the exercise of the moral feelings as under any other circumstances.

All men love excitement—which is only another way of saying that all men love life; for life is but a state of excitement. We seek it; and when it is sought by physical stimulants we see that it is unwholesome. When it is sought in social things, within due bounds, we believe it to be healthy. It may be sought also in moral feeling; and there it may be wholesome or injurious. A man may be religious to dissipation—if by *religion* you mean a state of being excited in the direction of moral thoughts and moral feelings. There is a dissipation in moral experience which is analogous to dissipation in social life, or even in physical things. And there are many persons who seek the higher forms of religious feeling, because with excitement in joy, and peace, and faith, and all those higher elements, there goes—shall I call it divine intoxication? It is, at all events, a kind of intoxication.

Now, one may seek moral intoxication to his damage. One may so live in the higher range of thought and feeling, and he may so, from day to day, cry out, "Lord! Lord!" that he shall quite forget the service of the Lord—that he shall quite forget the lower

life. One may seek with the disciples to build three tabernacles upon the Mount of Vision, and may dwell there, unwilling to go down to the base of the mountain where humanity is suffering the torments of demoniac possession. It is quite possible for one to be in a spirit of rapture, to have intense faith, to behold the vision of the world to come, to be wrapped in the excitement of song and prayer, and yet to be very selfish, very hard, very proud, very undomestic,—if his sphere of duty lie in the domestic circle,—very careless, and often dishonest—if his duty lie chiefly in his relations to his fellow-men in business. Experience teaches us that one may live in the most excitable moral condition; that he may live in such a state that a hymn shall send him flying through the air, or that a glowing prayer shall make him like a cloud on which the sun shines, and develops all its glories; that he may be in a condition in which he shall weep, and rejoice, and take on the highest forms of experience in the meetings of his brethren, and that yet, inwardly, he may be undrilled in conscience, not disciplined in taste, not active in doing the *work* of the Lord. And he is not the less faulty because his joy happens to lie in the plane of spiritual emotion in distinction from lower and social emotions.

Have you never seen an exceedingly pious person who was exceedingly disagreeable? Have you never found persons who spent hours by themselves, and afterwards made you wish they had spent still more hours by themselves? Have you never held discourses with those who walked with God, and lived as seeing Him who is invisible; who talked of heaven; and who made manifest their profound cognition of spiritual themes; but who were not disposed to yield; who were obstinate; who were not "easy to be entreated;" who were not inclined to humility; who were, rather, self-worshipers; who were not in sympathy with their fellow-men; who, indeed, were quite unconscious that there was such a duty as that of sympathizing with others; who were not radiant in the household; who were like icicles, pure, but very cold; who dispossessed joy itself?

Now, true piety sparkles with joy all over. A true Christian life would make even a little child love to be a Christian. One who has the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ will be as he was; and wherever he came everybody flocked to him. Even the old sturdy priests and pharisees could not keep away from him. Mothers with their children came to him. Children themselves ran to him. And the wicked—those who were not accounted to be worthy of standing in society free—they thronged his footsteps. Wherever the Master came there were sympathy and attractiveness; and

wherever there is a true piety, it should be sweet; it should be fragrant; it should draw the bees, the very insects—to it.

One may have religion in the form of excitability out of all proportion to his real moral standing. The moral sentiments may be reckoned upon as we reckon upon the sentiment of poetry. As there are certain constitutional elements which go to the production of mathematical capacity, so there are certain constitutional elements which go to the production of moral feelings. A man may pour out from his higher faculties an abundant experience; and yet his life may not be a good life. One may write poetry that shall soar to the seventh heaven; and yet he may be a miserable drunken wretch. We have in our own literature most melancholy instances of that kind. And yet the spirit of poetry, we should suppose, is a spirit of transcendent vision and elevation above the material. A man may be a poet, and sing like an angel, and live like a devil. And precisely in the same way the moral sentiments may be so separated from life that a man may have intense moral feelings, and yet may have no moral conduct; his feeling will be only a substitute for conduct, rather than the cause of it.

Moreover, the fullness and the frequency of higher forms of moral experience depend largely upon the original endowments of the mind—upon the capacity which men have in themselves. Of course, if a man is made with a very large brain, and the several departments of that brain are large and sensitive, the same causation will produce double or treble the result in his case, without reference to any endeavor on his part, that it produces in the cases of many other men. It is no credit to a man who is long-sighted that he sees a great way farther than a man who is short-sighted. His eyes were made to see farther; and it would be absurd for him to arrogate to himself a superior degree of excellence because, having perfect eyes, he can see better than those about him whose eyes are imperfect. But the same mistake is committed in religious experience. Some men feel strongly; but that fact does not indicate anything except that they have strong natures. It is a sign, not of attainment, but of original capacity. *And of him to whom much is given, much shall be required.*

There are very many men who weep easily; who rejoice naturally; who fly up into enthusiasm at the first touch; and who are supposed to be pre-eminently Christian above those who are relatively stupid, or torpid. Their endowment may be more fortunate, but so far as its being a test of piety is concerned it is of no value.

I suppose there is more virtue in many men who simply maintain decency in life than there is in other men who maintain pre-

eminent beauty in life. If you judge by the amount of effort that one must put forth, there are many men that live low moral lives who are deserving of more credit than many men who live high moral lives.

Here is a man who has been living all his life long just on the edge of swearing. Oaths have been perpetually hissing in him like steam repressed in a boiler; and he has kept them under. There is a man who never thought of an oath. And I think, as God measures, that there is more credit due the man who did not swear when he wanted to all the time, and held in with pain and watching and self-exertion, than to the man who did not swear only because he did not want to. The former man has expended more power to maintain an average decency than many men who stand far above him do to maintain their higher estates. I do not say that he is as good a specimen of manhood as they are; I am now speaking of the quality of merit, of the kind of measure, which is involved, and which depends upon us, and not upon what we have received—not upon our original endowment.

Many men have great cheer and great hope who are seeking daily, with more or less success, but with honest earnestness, to do God's will; and yet it may not be such as to show itself in the form of a distinct emotive experience.

What, then, is the product of these thoughts and these discriminations?

In the first place, no man is to suppose that he is not a Christian because he is not a subject of pre-eminent experiences. It may be a very desirable thing for you to have them; but even if you have them not, you still may be a Christian. He who does the will of God, or seeks to do it; he who keeps the commandments of Christ; he who fulfills the Scripture saying, "And hereby we do know that we love him, if we keep his commandments"—he is the Christian.

Well, what are the commandments of Christ? Who can doubt what they are that will take the four Gospels, not as they are glossed and interpreted by the mazes of theology, but in their simplicity? Let one take the four Gospels and read what was the life of Christ, and what his example was, and it will be found that the divine commandments are all summed up in a single element —a truly benevolent disposition; a heart that loves God and men, and brings a man into sympathy with his fellows.

If you undertake considerately, genuinely, earnestly, to live according to the commands of Christ Jesus, though you never have an emotion that rises to the form of a flame, though you

never have an experience that shoots itself up radiantly, though you never thought that you saw a vision nor dreamed a dream, your steadfast living on the lower plane where you are endeavoring to carry out the spirit of true beneficence, is evidence that you are a child of God. They who keep the commandments of God are his children.

We hear much said about the love of Christ; we read much about it in hymns; and it is beautiful. We read much about it in the biographies of holy men, to whom it gave great delight. We read much about it in the history of the disciples of Jesus. And it is made a test everywhere. "You must love Christ," people are told. The reply is, "I cannot love him; I am never conscious of loving him." And here comes in this very precious passage: "We know that we love him if we keep his commandments." It is not necessary to the loving of Christ that there should be a vision of him—a portraiture of him. It is not necessary that you should, in some happy moment, see him, and have a lover's rapture and enthusiasm in his presence, and pour out your heart consciously toward that Being who has been revealed to you. I do not say that there is no such experience as that, and that it is not a higher experience, and that it is not one to be desired; but I say this, that it is not necessary. A man may be so literal as never to have had an imagination of the Saviour in his life; and yet he may be a disciple, he may be living obediently, and he may have a hope of salvation assured to him. For, if we keep Christ's commands, we give evidence that we love him. In other words, there is a practical as well as an emotive way of loving. Those who love Christ with an understanding of the proportions of spiritual life, are on a higher plane than those who have not such understanding; but they are not the only ones that love. Some love by conduct, and they confederate their faculties in a supremacy of divine benevolence. They place great stress on daily ethical experience. If men have an emotive experience, they are fortunate indeed. They are the poets. They are the prophets. They are the priests. They are the elect. They are the higher order of men. God orders it as it pleaseth him in that regard. I do not undervalue this experience; I would put it very high in my estimate; but I would say to the poor man and woman who stand on the lowest plane; who are literal; who are unimaginative; who are practical; who have very little upspring; who lack the emotive element; who wish they could sing and glow, but cannot; who wish they could see a picture of the Lord in the air, but cannot; who wish they could have love to a Person, as others have, but

never have it—I would say to them, If you obey Christ's commands, he says, "Hereby I know that you love me, and I accept your love in that you keep my commandments. If your practical life is according to the spirit of true benevolence; if you accept the command, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' and you try to love God; 'and thy neighbor as thyself,' and you try to love your neighbor as yourself; if you take the commandments as they are given in the Word of God, and attempt, day by day, to live according to those commandments, that practical endeavor I accept as love to me."

And why not? Is not that the very thing that we are doing every day in our intercourse with each other? Are the most tender relations always those in which there is the most declarative affection—the most demonstrative love? There are some households where the mother is one of those phlogistic natures that we meet with, and wants forever to be caressing and kissing her children, and talks much of sentiment. She does feel a great deal of love for her children; but, after all, their shoes run down at the heel, and their stockings are not always mended, and the table is slatternly set, and things go at loose ends about the house, and the husband is not very happy; but she makes up for what she lacks in practical matters, by excess of feeling. It is all feeling and no practice, with her. But is there not to be something besides feeling in domestic life?

On the other hand, there are multitudes of mothers who almost never kiss their children; who very seldom indulge in the rapture of feeling; who have not much feeling anyhow. But where has the feeling of these emotionless mothers gone to? I have seen brooks that had nothing to do, and that flowed all day and all night full of water. I have seen other brooks that, though they seemed to have the same sources of supply, every day as they flowed down, grew shallower and shallower. Where was the water? I found that it went into the race on one side of the channel, and down into the mill, where it was set to *work;* and I found that far below it came back into the channel again.

I look at many people, and I see that their emotions do not turn wheels. I know others who do not seem to have much feeling, but in whom all the practical elements of life suck up that thought and that feeling which exist in them in the form of a latent force. They are absorbed in the affairs of daily life. And so it comes to pass that frequently the best household is not that where they have the most hallelujah, but that where they have the most order and system and kindness, and all that which is developed in the lower forms of what is good.

Is not that love, then, which pervades the domestic economy, and orders aright, and has foresight?

"But, after all," you may say, "is not emotive life better than mere practical life? Suppose you had both?" It would be all the better. But it is not everybody who has steam enough to work the engine and blow the whistle all the time. We must take men just as they are made.

Some men generate too much feeling, and some do not generate enough; so you must understand and take every man according to his disposition.

We hear Christ saying: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Yes, there is sometimes a love that never speaks. There is a love which hides itself, and never wishes to have its work known. There is a love that simply diffuses itself in creation, in organization, in varied industry. It permeates life. It is like the sunlight, that goes down into the ground, and is lost, but comes up again, as violets, as daisies, as tulips, as all manner of flowers. There is a quality of the soul that pours the light of love down into the practical aspects of life, and comes up in the forms of joy, and of gladness, and of purity, and of truth, and of justice, and of the fulfillment of all known duty. And it is a great comfort to me to hear Christ saying: "You may know that you are mine, if you only try, with all your heart, to keep my commandments. This practical obedience I accept as love." Oh! what a release it is from bondage! Oh! how many persons, comprehending it, say, "I am comforted!"

When I was young, and longing for the truth, I thought I must have the same experiences that other eminent Christians had. I read of the raptures that old Dr. Payson used to have, and thought I must have the same. I tried to follow other men's glowing experiences. And so it was with my acquaintance Montgomery, who, before his conversion, was a bad boy with a great many good spots. He said to a good old Methodist Elder who was laboring faithfully to show him the way, and who recounted to him his own stirring and rapturous emotions of love, and joy in the Holy Ghost: "Now, take me up there where you were. Where did you kneel down? Put my knees just where yours were. Where did you look? I look there too, but I do not see anything." Nothing came to him, and he went away as unsatisfied as he came. Many persons read what saints have seen and felt, and have gone and put their knees where the saints knelt, and have uttered the same prayers that they uttered, and waited for the same results; but those results have not come, and they have said, "It is because I am depraved."

Do not you know that this is so? Are there none here who have done that same thing—as I did? In old Amherst College is a room that I used to occupy. I never go there that I do not stop and look in at the door and window of that room. In the first year of my Amherst experience, if ever there was a thirsty ground that longed for rain, my soul longed for it. If ever there was a yearning, an imploration, which words could not measure nor express, I had it. I longed for the evidence that I was a Christian. I longed for the evidence that I was a child of God. With every single feeling flush; with my soul mounted on wings of plumage bright as that of autumn birds, ready for far flyings, all that I needed was the slightest instruction. But the instruction did not come; and so I was reading and reading and reading, and throwing myself on my knees, nightly, and praying, literally by the hour, "Lord, come down! Lord, change this heart of mine! Lord, give me to see thee! Lord, reveal Christ to me!" and nothing came—*nothing;* no more than if I had been a pilgrim going to Mecca; no more than if I had been a Fakir in India. And I am sorry, from the depth of my heart, for those who are reading the transcendent, inflammatory experiences of men who were ordained of God to live in a higher moral sphere, and who think that everybody, that all sorts of folks, though they be down at the bottom of the ladder, must mount upon the same experiences before they can be children of God. Oh, poor creatures! it is not necessary that you should see Christ, or that you should fashion an image of him before which your heart shall spring up and sing and glow. Hear Christ saying to you, "Come and be my scholars, and let me teach you. Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you—what? Ecstacy? No; 'rest.' Come and trust me."

Love will break out in some natures in the form of emotion; but if it is not strong enough in your nature to develop itself as a separate emotion, then let it manifest itself in the form of an inspiration of daily life. Live aright. Live lives of genuine benevolence; live lives of purity; live true lives; and Christ will accept those lives as evidence of love to him.

When I go away and leave my little garden-spot in the country to my faithful friend and superintendent there, and return in the autumn to see that, without a word from me, he has known my taste; that he has planted the flowers that he knows I love; that he has cared for those parts of the ground which he knows I am most particular about; that he has planted the vegetables of which I am the most fond; that he has managed the place as he thinks I

am best pleased to have it managed, I take that summer's work as evidence of his regard for me, though he has not one word of enthusiasm for me when I meet him, but only a shake of the hand, and, "How do you do? I am glad to see you back again;" though he never puts his arms about me, nor seems overjoyed at seeing me. As I go over the ground, and see the pains that he has taken, I say, "He thought of me. This is for me. And this is for me. His whole summer's work proves that he has had me in his mind."

Now, where Christ finds that a man's life has been shaped in obedience to his commandments; where he finds that his nature has been made deeper and larger and richer; where he finds that selfishness and pride and vanity and envy and all manner of evil dispositions have been cast out from him; where he finds that he has changed his dislikes and likes so that they shall be in conformity to the divine will—where Christ finds that these things have taken place in a man, for his sake, he accepts that man's life as a token of love to him.

On the other hand, there is profit to be derived from that general view in this: That those who are walking in the places of Christian experience should take heed. For it is quite possible for a man to besiege the very walls of heaven with his rapture, and yet receive the answer, "Depart: I never knew you." "Lord! Lord!" may be rapturously spoken; but how you have treated your fellow-men, how you have lived where your duties were, what you have done with the obscure parts of your life, and what you have wrought by your dispositions—all these questions are to come up in review in the last day. It is not enough that you know how to be cheerful and rapturous. It is not enough that you take fire easily at meetings among your brethren. It is not enough that you love hymns and prayers. It is not enough that the society of those who love these things inflames and kindles you. Take heed that you do not make your religious experiences a substitute for ethical life. See that those experiences make you more faithful, more honest, more gentle, and more self-denying for the sake of others. By a reaction of your higher experiences enrich your life. While higher experiences become great joys to those who have them, let them also become nutriment to their own and other souls.

Not every man, then, that says, "Lord, in thy name have we taught, and in thy name cast out devils," but those who can draw near and say, "Lord, behold me and those whom thou hast given me;" those who can bring with them their companions and others over whom they have wept, for whom they have labored, in whom they have lived, and upon whom they have planted; those who can

show that they have been to their fellow-men what Christ was to them and is to all, giving himself as a perpetual sacrifice, that men in his life might find their own lives; those who can present themselves before God with a record of right conduct, as well as of holy dispositions and noble experiences—they shall be received by him; and over their heads shall be heard, with rejoicing, the declaration, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Begin well at the very bottom; carry up fidelity through every part of your life; and if it be given to you, besides this, to mount as the flames do, and glow with the higher forms of Christian experience, be thankful for them likewise; but do not take one as a substitute for the other. Grow up into a perfect manhood in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our Father, that thou dost not despise our weakness, and that thou dost not look upon our infirmities and our transgressions with indignation in over-measure. Thou art a Father full of compassion. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust. We rejoice in this compassionateness of thy nature: for thou hast not put us far off from thee: the length of the road is of thine ordaining. We have what thou hast given us; and thou hast taught us to use it so that our talents shall be multiplied, and our strength increased, and our knowledge augmented, and our virtues carried forward towards perfection. But the way is long, and the task is difficult, and the temptations are often very great. We rejoice that thou art not exacting nor stern. We rejoice that thou dost not hold us, except as a father holds his children, to the tasks of duty. We rejoice that thou art full of sympathy and leniency, and art wont to overlook, making haste to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. And we rejoice, not only that thou dost forgive, but that thou dost still hold us up to the standard of duty; that thou wilt not suffer us to fall into indifference; that thou wilt not permit us to go on in ways of evil; that thou dost love us patiently enough and continuously enough to press us upward and onward toward that manhood which is in Christ Jesus. We thank thee for thy fidelity. We thank thee for thy punishments. We thank thee for all those piercings and woundings by which thou dost manifest thyself to be a Father, chastening whom thou dost love, lest they fall off and become recreant, and unworthy of thy paternity. We ask thy forgiveness for all the sins which thou hast beheld in us in days gone by. We ask thy forgiveness for all those states of selfishness, of pride, of envy, and of worldliness in its offensive sense, which thou dost behold in us. We pray that thou wilt help us from day to day to root out from ourselves those causes of transgression which exist there. We pray that thou wilt strengthen us to every virtuous purpose; that thou wilt increase in us every aspiration for that which is good; and that thou wilt give us unwearied pursuit after all those things which are high and noble. And may we not be discouraged, nor turned back, nor be weary in well-doing.

Grant thy blessing to rest on each one as thou see'st that he needs. Wilt thou comfort those that mourn, wilt thou lift up those who are in bereavement, that they may have a sanctified sorrow, that they may be filled with hope, and that they may taste the secret sweetness of joy in their souls?

We pray that thou wilt let the light of the resurrection morn shine upon those who have sent forward their children and dear friends to the home beyond. May they see them in the light of the coming glory, being themselves expectant heirs of immortality.

We pray that thou wilt be near to those who are in discouragements, and whose strength seems overmatched by their circumstances. Grant unto them the inspiration of hope. May they live by hope. May hope be in them a bounty, working all courage, and patience, and fidelity.

We pray that all may feel that it is the hand of God that permits whatever trials come upon them. May they feel that thy providence is over all thy work. Let them remember that not a sparrow can fall to the ground unnoticed and unpermitted, and that the least things which concern our happiness and welfare, here and hereafter, are before thine eye. May we all, as children, be patient with the dealing of the Lord.

We pray that thou wilt grant strength to those who are under the burdens of life, and in its perplexities, and are in doubt as to the way of duty,

and often find duty burdensome. As their day is, so may their strength be also.

We pray that every one may glory in the Lord, and not in his own power, nor wisdom, nor skill, nor riches. We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant unto all thy people who hunger and thirst after righteousness the fulfillment of thy gracious promises. May they discern what those things are in which they are most deficient. May they long for those things most which shall tend most to the perfectness of their nature here. May all thy people stand to thee in relations of love; and from thee may they interpret thy commands, thy dispensations, and thy providences, and their own duties. And we beseech of thee that they may be able to search themselves in the light of a new benevolence, and see where they stand, and what are their joys and sorrows. So may they have the interpretation in themselves, from out of thy law, which is thine own self.

We pray, O God, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon parents who are in the midst of their duties and offices of rearing children. Grant them the wisdom of patience. May they have joy in their children. And if there be any that are in sorrow and trouble on account of their children, may they feel that God is their Counselor, and Stay, and Strength. If there are any who are wandering for the moment from the fold, bring them back, we beseech of thee, to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

We pray that thou wilt be with those whose thoughts go out in love to wherever their beloved are, upon the sea, in the wilderness, or in distant lands. Wherever our children, or companions, or friends may be, as our thoughts to-day go out to meet them, may thy thoughts accompany ours, and may thy blessings abound with these dear ones.

We rejoice, O Lord, that we can commit everything which is precious to us to thy hands, believing that thou lovest us more than we love ourselves, and that whatever is dear to us is more dear to thee than it can be to us. Unto thee as a Tower of refuge may we run. Wilt thou be to us a Pavilion, where we may hide ourselves when storms are out and darkness comes. Grant that we may be able, every day, more and more to bring ourselves and all that interests us into the presence of our God, and there find rest under the shadow of his wings.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon those who go forth to labor among the poor, the sick, and the ignorant, to relieve and instruct them, and to lead them into the ways of virtue and truth. May they be strong in this work of the Lord. And may they reap while they sow. May they take their joy as they go along. May they think it reward enough to be workers with God.

Be with our Sunday-schools and Bible classes, all of them, as they are gathered together. And grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who go forth to visit jails, and prisons, and houses of refuge. Grant, we pray thee, that they may carry the spirit, and not the letter, of Christ with them. And may they have abundant fruit of their fidelity.

We pray for the churches in this city, and for the churches in the great city adjoining, and for all the churches throughout the length and breadth of this land. We pray that they may more and more seek after the things which make for purity, and truth, and concord. And may that spirit of love which brought Christ from above pervade all his churches. May the power of a true benevolence be felt in them. And may they promote justice, intelligence, and all forms of civilization.

Let our nation rise up before thee in the symmetry of strength and in the beauty of virtue. Hear our cry for the nations that are despised, that are cast down, and that sit in darkness. Roll away, we beseech of thee, the night which oppresses them. Bring in the daylight of knowledge, so that

superstition, and despotism, and all that wickedness by which men are able to hold their fellow-men in subjection may be done away. And grant, we pray thee, that at last the fulfillment of thy promises may come, and the whole earth see thy salvation.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be praises evermore *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the word of instruction. May it comfort, and may it warn. May we be delivered from dependence upon our emotions and feelings. May we rather look for the whole of our lives—for what we are and what we propose to be—to the working out of our daily life in the sphere where thy providence calls us, and where our duties are. We pray for help. We pray for divine pity, and succor, and strength, while living; and in dying; and in living again. And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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